



Japanese Geography



Japan is made up of four main islands. Hokkaido (hoe-kai-doe) is the second largest and most northern of the main islands. This island is underdeveloped for three reasons: it is so cold, it is made up mostly of forests and it is too far from the main island.

Honshu (hahn-shoe) is the largest and main island. Tokyo, the nation's capital, is located here. The major port and harbor of Japan is in Yokohama. Kyoto is the major cultural center of the country. Kobe is an important commercial and industrial center. All of these important cities are on the island of Honshu.



Shikoku (she-co-cool) is the smallest of the islands. It is bordered on the east by the Pacific Ocean and on the west by the Inland Sea.

The most southern and third largest of the main islands is Kyushu (key-oo-shoe). Beppu is a city of international fame for its hot springs and mineral baths nestled in the serene mountains and plateaus on the eastern shore. There are several thousands of smaller islands in Japan.

About 72 percent of Japan's land is mountainous. Down the very center of the nation lies a slender mountain range called the Japanese Alps. Japan is so mountainous that there is very little habitable land left. Every bit of land is treasured and used wisely. The highest and most significant mountain is Mt. Fuji (12,388 feet [3716.4 m]).

There are numerous swift rivers, excellent harbors, splendid lakes, sandy beaches, jagged cliffs, peaceful coves, cascading waterfalls and picturesque valleys all over Japan.

Lake Biwa is Japan's largest lake. It is 260 square miles (673.4 sq. km) in size. Several little islands dot its surface and the scenery around the lake is superb.

Japan is surrounded by the Sea of Japan on the west, the Pacific Ocean on the east, the sea of Okhotsk in the north and the Inland Sea on the western side of Shikoku.

There are many semi-active volcanoes due to the fact that Japan is located on the Pacific Ring of Fire. Earthquakes happen on a daily basis. Over the years, many earthquakes have destroyed important cities in Japan. The people are now well-informed about earthquake preparedness.